

Announcement of Refinements Made to Power Mobility Codes

CMS issued new final codes for power mobility devices in February 2005 to become effective January 1, 2006. This new code set was created to address policy and pricing difficulties experienced with the existing power mobility codes. Part of these new codes sets included testing standards and required manufacturers to have their products tested and the results submitted to the SADMERC for a determination as to which code to place their power mobility devices.

Based on information gathered during the development of the local coverage determination and from feedback received from the greater mobility community regarding current testing experiences, we have identified the need to make refinements to the HCPCS codes, performance standards, and testing requirements for these devices that will be implemented on January 1, 2006. CMS has concluded that the current classification/testing standards published in February must be revised in order to create a sufficient methodology for identifying and differentiating among the different types of equipment. For example, the testing requirements established for the “standard use” power wheelchair created too high a bar for some types of chairs and did not allow us to make a meaning distinction (based on levels of durability and performance) between the numerous categories.

Therefore, CMS has made several changes to the power mobility coding sets and the corresponding testing requirements that were published in February 2005. Manufacturers were told to have their products tested and results submitted to the SADMERC so they can make a category determination by September 1, 2005. Due to the changes that have been made to the coding sets and testing requirements, the testing deadline has been expanded till November 15, 2005.

CMS and the SADMERC have instituted the following changes to the code sets and the testing requirements:

- Added a new “standard use” category for power mobility devices.
- Revised the characteristics of the previous categories of power mobility devices.
- Revised the testing requirements for all categories of power mobility devices to be consistent with current RESNA standards.
- Establish a testing strategy that will allow us to produce reliable and will allow us to consistently assign power wheelchairs to specific codes.
- Revise testing requirements so that we are able to differentiate among the various levels of equipment in terms of durability and level of performance.
- Extended the testing period for all products not already tested or failed testing to November 15, 2005.

It is CMS’ belief that the changes made to the coding sets will provide physicians and other practitioners with a wide range of choices that will allow beneficiaries to be placed in the most appropriate chair.

CMS has developed the following criteria and timeline depending on your current testing status:

Testing Requirements for Power wheelchairs-

1. Products already tested by September 1, 2005

For products already tested and the results have been submitted to the SADMERC, the SADMERC will make every effort possible to extrapolate the testing results to determine the proper code placement.

2. Products for which testing is in progress

For products that have not been tested as of September 1, 2005, but their products are currently being tested under the old standards, these manufacturers must have their products tested according to the revised testing protocols and submit results to the SADMERC by November 15, 2005.

3. Products not tested by September 1, 2005

For untested products and for products that have failed testing under the old standards, manufacturers will be required to use new testing protocols and submit results to SADMERC by November 15, 2005.

Information regarding code verification requests and testing requirements can be obtained at the following SADMERC website:

<http://www.palmettogba.com/sadmerc>

From the SADMERC website select coding bulletin under topics on the right hand side.

Information regarding the proposed local coverage determination can be obtained at all of the DMERC websites:

<http://www.palmettogba.com>

<http://www.adminastar.com/Providers/DMERC/MedicalPolicy/MedicalPolicyDraft.cfm>

http://www.cignamedicare.com/dmerc/lmrp_lcd/draft/index.html

<http://www.tricenturion.com>